

BEIJING TODAY

COMMERCE



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Anything for academic success

Gaokao season is a time for prayers.
But many parents who prefer not to leave their child's fate to the supernatural turn to "Gaokao Mills."
The cram schools, whose conditions might make Foxconn managers blush, are dedicated to ensuring achievement at the cost of a year's freedom and 80,000 yuan.
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MYOTee explodes in popularity over Duanwu



Team members of MYOTee

By BAO CHENGRONG
Beijing Today Staff

The avatar generating app MYOTee has exploded in popularity on WeChat since the Duanwu Festival.

Unlike MomentCam, last year's pop app that turned real portraits into comic avatars, MYOTee allows users to craft their idealized cartoon depictions from the ground up.

MYOTee was developed by Guo Lie, a former product manager at Tencent. Guo says the app was inspired by his personal interest in animation, especially the Japanese cartoon *One Piece*.

The app is targeted at young adults born in the 1990s. Most of the development team consists of young programmers and artists experienced in appealing to the generation's tastes. Guo attributes his app's success to the era of the mobile Internet.

Avatars are especially popular with young adults. As the

first generation to grow up with the Internet, young adults conduct the bulk of their social interaction on such platforms as WeChat, Weibo, QQ Zone and Baidu's Tieba.

The first wave of users was brought in not by advertisements, but by MYOTee's high rank in download lists, Guo says. Top users are young women, who enjoy creating avatars for their boyfriends, husbands, family or coworkers.

Luo Ying, an employee at Deloitte & Touche, says she sees the app as something like a jigsaw puzzle: one in which she can arrange the pieces to represent different people.

Lao Shu, a netizen at Zhihu, says the timing of the release was also important. The short Duanwu Festival break and the burst in free time after college entrance exams created enough idle hands to explore MYOTee.

In spite of fast growth, the app is already seeing a shrink in its

user base.

Zhou Wei, an advertising text creator, says she was drawn to MYOTee's game-like interface. However, she says the avatars are too limited in which personalities they can convey. Zhou says her attempts to use the app resulted in avatars that were too ugly or too beautiful – never a fair representation.

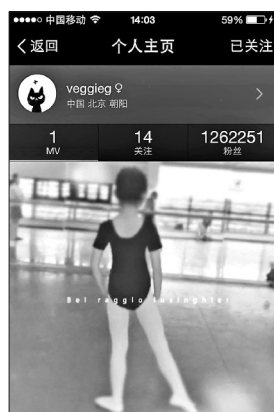
But finding a way to monetize MYOTee remains elusive.

Guo says virtual merchandise and personalized gifts may be one option. With the popular MomentCam already stagnating, it's hard to imagine how long MYOTee's popularity will last.

Guo says he didn't expect the app to remain a top download. His company is attempting to cultivate a core base of regular users. MYOTee is currently receiving weekly updates.

Future versions may introduce the ability to create full-body avatars or select more emotions or backgrounds.

Meipai revives the micro-video market



Meipai encourages people to record their daily lives.

By BAO CHENGRONG
Beijing Today Staff

Ten-second film apps are nothing new, but none are quite like Meipai. The app shot to the top of the App Store's free listing on the day of its release.

Similar to Vine, Meipai uses a pause-oriented shooting style. The app has won

many users with its smart way to minimize post-production efforts like cutting, filtering and track mixing.

Its adoption by popular celebrities like Faye Wang, Karen Joy Morris, Show Lo and Angelababy doesn't hurt either.

To attract more users and keep existing users active, Meipai locked down three of its video features: Barcelona, Juno and

Clash. Users can unlock the features by sharing Meipai videos in their WeChat friends circle.

The latest version adds an "Interesting Users" ranking to recommend interesting, odd or remarkable videos.

Jiang Shan, a frequent user of Meipai, said the app offers a much richer experience than similar photo apps. She said

she hopes the app can offer a better way to pull music clips into videos.

Currently, the app offers only 33 possible songs.

With Sina's own micro-video app stagnating, it will be interesting to see how Meipai develops. Success will depend on winning more content creators than content consumers, if Sina is an indicator.

Harsh words for 'Gaokao Mill' may be unwarranted

By BAO CHENGRONG
Beijing Today Staff

This year's National College Entrance Exams drew attention to Lu'an Mao Tan Chang Middle School in Anhui Province.

Known as the largest "Gaokao Mill" in Asia, the school sent more than 12,000 students to sit the exam this year.

The school is located in a remote valley of Mt. Dabie and is famed for its astonishingly high rate of graduate admissions. As many as 80 percent of its students who take the Gaokao are admitted to university.

This year, more than 8,000 parents sent their children to prepare at the school.

The school's success is due primarily to a training environment that would make even Foxconn blush. Students are required to study more than 16 hours a day and are prohibited touching phones or computers.

The cost of studying at the school is relevantly high, with a 10-square-meter dorm costing 8,000 yuan per year. Yu Yongmei, a mother living near the school to support her daughter, said the year's tuition and living costs came to more than 80,000 yuan. The popular school is the main economic engine of Lu'an Town.

But the harsh requirements and high costs have many questioning whether the school is really worth it. Yang Chen, chief economist at Convoy, said expanded university enrollment has helped many young Chinese realize their dreams of higher education.



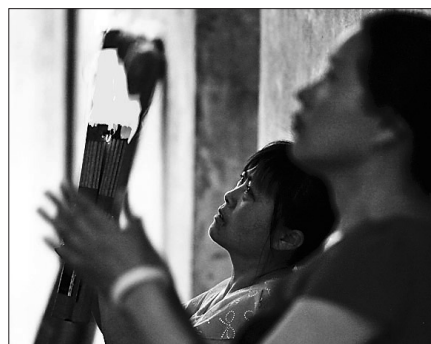
Anhui's "Gaokao Mill" sent more than 12,000 students to sit the National College Entrance Exam this year.

While achieving dreams is admirable, the fact remains that 30 percent of China's college graduates remain unemployable. Education reformers have called for creative talents – not expert test takers.

Yang cited Ma Yun as an example of why creative education is more important than rote memorization.

Zhang Limei, a commentator for the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, said the image of Mao Tan Chang Middle School has been unfairly demonized and that the school's high enrollment is due to provincial restrictions that prevent high schools from opening training classes.

Zhang is one of many commentators who still endorse the Gaokao as a "relevantly fair" selection system. Most middle schools in villages or small town are as



Parents pray for their children's academic success.

intense as Mao Tan Chang Middle School, she said.

Village cram centers where parents accompany their students are not uncommon,

said Si Hanhan, a social commentator. "When young students from villages have more options than the Gaokao for higher education and success, these kinds of mills will vanish," Si said.

Unlike the renowned Hengshui High School in Hebei, which gathers the best students from across the province to pad its high acceptance rate, educators point out that very few students at Mao Tan Chang Middle School can enter the Top 100 universities of Anhui Province. However, it still gives students from a poor background the chance to go to a relevantly good school.

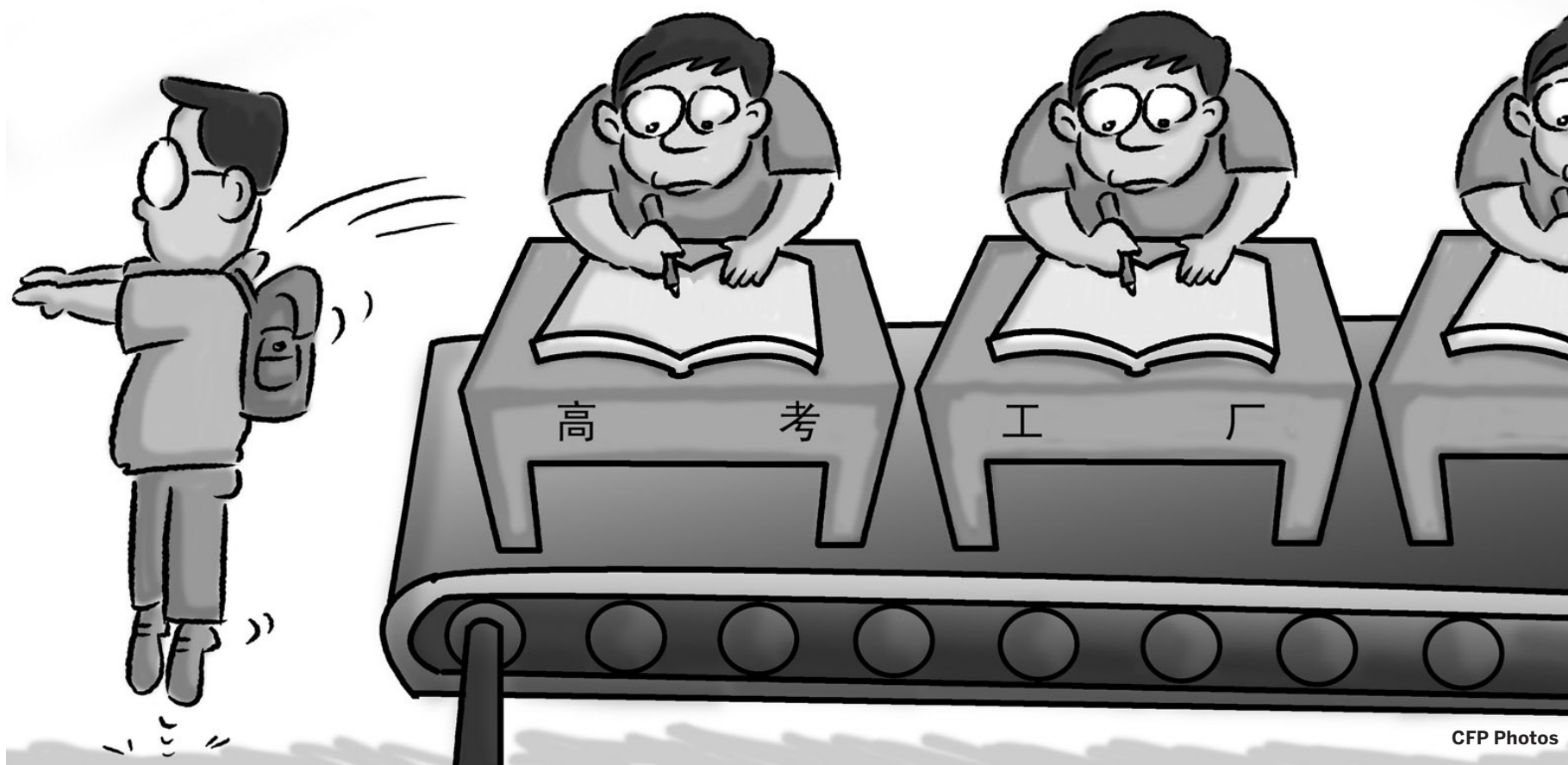
A report on the employment of university students by Tsinghua University found that salaries for children of officials are 13 percent higher than employers from ordinary family. Not to mention the advantages offered by hukou and education levels.

But the advantages of going to university remain obvious.

An investigation by the *Wall Street Journal* in 2011 found that 62.5 percent of the paper's readers believed the rote memorization style of education employed in Asian schools is more useful to children's development than free learning.

But K. Ander Ericsson, a US psychologist, said it takes 10,000 hours of learning and practice to become an expert. Some of those hours must be spent engaging in constructive thinking and receiving harsh feedback.

Exam-oriented education not only kills children's creativity but stunts their psychological growth, she said.



CFP Photos

British Council joins FutureLearn for education online



The British Library is aiding FutureLearn.



University of Leeds, a founding member of FutureLearn



FutureLearn promotes English as an international language

By YANG XIN
Beijing Today Intern

The British Council is throwing its support behind FutureLearn, a massive online open course (MOOC) launched by 12 UK universities.

The classes, which include an online English study course, are supported by prominent schools such as the University of Leeds, King's College London and the University of Birmingham.

FutureLearn has been making itself known in the UK as a leading education



Great Britain is going digital.

CFP photos

platform that integrates the country's teaching resources with cultural institutions such as the British Council, British Library and British Museum.

In the online course "Exploring English: Language and Culture," language learners receive customized lessons in British culture and in-depth English study intended to improve language skills.

With nearly 80 years of experience in English language training and cultural and artistic education, the British Council helps English learners around the world to master practical skills.

Its short videos on FutureLearn present different topics each week, such as the role of English as a global language, the environment, entrepreneurship and literature. Students develop listening skills by hearing authentic examples of spoken English.

Tutors help explain and highlight useful points alongside the video to direct students to improve their spoken and written English.

Short quizzes and discussions are available to help students measure their comprehension throughout the course.

At the end of each week, students are asked to describe their own feelings and experiences about that week's topic in a short essay.

Students who require a Statement of Participation will be able to purchase certificates after completing the course.

"Exploring English: Language and Culture" will begin a new session on September 1. The course lasts six weeks.

More information about the course is available on the FutureLearn website FutureLearn.com and on Weibo at weibo.com/educationuk.

Embassy invites alt rock act to MAO Livehouse



Split Works photos

By YANG XIN
Beijing Today Intern

Cracker is coming to the stage in Beijing on June 28 at the invitation of the American Embassy.

The alternative rock band is best

known for its gold-selling 1993 album *Kerosene Hat*.

The band will be performing many of the most popular songs from its best-selling albums of the last two decades. Its current lineup includes vocalist David Lowery, guitarist Johnny Hickman, bass guitarist Davey Faragher and drummer Phil Jones.

By mixing power punk and the melodious music of the Kinks and Southern American country, Cracker won favor from the listening public and critics. Its popular songs include "Low," "Get Off This" and "Teen Angst."

As a band that keeps pace with the times, Cracker enjoys a base of fans scattered across America and continen-

tal Europe. It has remained impressively popular with young listeners in spite of its widening age gap.

Aside from interacting with fans, Cracker hopes to promote intellectual property protection for musicians through tour performance.

"Cracker was the epitome of the era. The band marked the golden age of American alternative rock," Spin magazine wrote.

MAO Livehouse

Where: 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: June 28, 9 pm

Ticket: 60 yuan (students/presale), 80 yuan (at door)

China and Switzerland link In academic events

By YANG XIN

Beijing Today Intern

Swiss Day events at the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (Beihang) gave Chinese youth and educators a chance to interact with Swiss luminaries.

Hosted by the Embassy of Switzerland in Beijing, Swissnex China and Beihang, Swiss Day included lectures by Swiss professors such as Thierry Courvoisier, president of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, and Volker Gass, director of the Swiss Space Center.

The day's events also included the signing of a new academic cooperation agreement between Beihang University and Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL), a leading Swiss university respected for its contributions to science and technology. The two will collaborate on the Beihang-EPFL Space Technology Initiative (BEST).

In her opening remarks, Salome Meyer, a Swiss diplomat, spoke about her country and gave students a quick quiz on their Swiss knowledge. Chinese alumni of Swiss universities also participated in the exchange and shared tips about studying abroad in Switzerland.

Mini-exhibitions shared the art of famous Swiss photographer Fabian Oefner, known for his scientific photography of natural phenomena, an exhibition introducing Swiss success stories in space and an exhibition on CERN, the European Council for Nuclear Research.

To better display Swiss culture, the Embassy of Switzerland arranged a screening of the film *Tutti Giú* at the end of the event.

"I come here to learn something from the speakers, many of whom are at the forefront of my major," said an astronomy student who attended.

"Their lectures reminded me of how



Swiss Day at Beihang University encourages students to get in touch with Swiss culture and science.



wonderful astronomy is, even though it's not my major. Switzerland is now high on my list of places I want to visit for contin-



ued education," said another student named Zhou.

Swiss Day at Beihang University offers



Photo by the Embassy of Switzerland in Beijing

a balance between knowledge and fun and promotes Switzerland as a destination for study and research.

Art dialogue strengthens Sino-Hungarian ties

By YANG XIN

Beijing Today Intern

Lajos Szalay and Fan Zhou's works are coming together to strengthen China's ties with Hungary on the countries' 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Hosted by Embassy of Hungary and organized by the Beijing Hungarian Cultural Institute, *Harmony in Diversity: an Art Dialogue Between Lajos Szalay and Fan Zhou* shows an artistic union of the countries' spiritual goals.

"Harmony in diversity refers to the ideal state outlined by Confucius. It's about people with united spiritual goals finding various ways to achieve them," said Sheng



The ambassador called for the two countries to enhance cultural communications.

Photo by Yang Xin

Wei, deputy editor-in-chief of *Art* magazine. "The exhibition presents art by two artists rooted in different cultures but with consistent artistic pursuits."

Lajos Szalay was known as an artistic genius in his times. Pablo Picasso praised him as the greatest painter aside from himself. Fan Zhou, on the other hand, represents traditional Chinese painting style. His works make use of traditional concepts such as tao and chi to imbue his landscapes with philosophical implications.

The exhibition includes 15 pieces by the two artists. It will remain on display through June 28.

Cecilia Szilas, Hungarian ambassador

extraordinary and plenipotentiary, and Szonja Andrea Buslig, Hungarian cultural counselor, attended to express their congratulations on the anniversary.

Zhu Zushou, former Chinese ambassador to Hungary, recalled the countries' history of friendship in his remarks.

"Hungary was one of the first nations to form diplomatic relations with China," Zhu said.

"Last year, when Chinese premier Li Keqiang visited Central Europe, our two nations signed a series of cooperative agreements. Hungarian Prime Minister Orban's visit to China this February has proven fruitful as well."

Weekend escape to the wetlands

By YANG XIN

Beijing Today Intern

Beijing's scenic wetlands are a great getaway from the downtown's hot and dry summer air.

Known as the "lungs of the planet," wetlands play a number of roles in the environment. There are a lot of options for a wetland getaway depending on what you are interested in seeing.

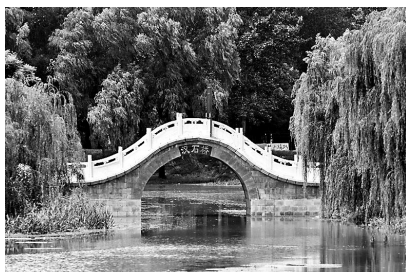
Yeyahu Park Beijing's national wetland park

Yeyahu Park is Beijing's only wetland reserve specifically for birds and has more than 150 hectares covered by water.

The park is located in Yanqing County in northwestern Beijing. Thanks to the Guanting Reservoir, Yeyahu has an abundance of fish and shrimp, making it the perfect environment for wild birds. As of the end of 2013, more than 280 species of wild birds were recorded as nesting in the wetland reserve.

It's a park that bird lovers cannot afford to miss.

The park is preparing for a "Rare Animal Adoption" and "Wetland Claim" this summer. Interested residents can "adopt" a specific species of birds for between 200 and 500 yuan. Adopters will be allowed to raise their adopted birds in person under guidance of feeders.



Hanshiqiao Park Wilderness in the city

Hanshiqiao Park straddles the junction of Yang Town and Lisui Town in Shunyi District. Its wetland area is the only remaining natural reed marsh in the capital.

The park covers an area of about 1,900 hectares, 163.5 hectares of which is covered by thick reed growth. The marsh has won in the name of "Beijing's Little Baiyangdian."

With 292 species of wild plants and 153 species of birds,

Hanshiqiao Park provides a wild landscape for city dwellers.

For flower lovers, now is exactly the time to go and see lotus in bloom.

Touring projects there include fishing, bird watching, cycling, paintball and boating. Visitors can go fruit picking at the neighboring Happy Farm, about 200 meters from the front gate of Hanshiqiao.



Nanhaizi Park Beijing's biggest wetland park

Located in the northeast of Daxing District on Fifth Ring Road, Nanhaizi Park has been open to the public for free since September 2010.

The park is still developing and is expected to occupy 1165 hectares after the completion of its second phase. About 20 percent of the park area is covered in water.

The park is best known for its milu reserve, a leisure area designed as a conservation project to protect the Chinese milu deer. The thick reeds and muddy swamp provide an environment capable of supporting more than 100 deer.

In order to promote environmental-



ism, Nanhaizi has a special zone for environmental education. Tourists can see

fallen stone tablets in a line that show the domino effect of what happens when species go extinct. The final domino represents humans.

Empty birdcages, hives and wood-carvings serve as silent warnings about the need for environmental protection.

Once counted among the 10 great sights of Yan Jing, Nanhaizi has been famous since ancient times.

The area was established as an imperial hunting ground in the Liao dynasty and became a garden during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Many monuments remain to reflect the past glories of imperial China.



CFP photos

Stage

The Humor Section presents: Ronny Chieng

Ronny Chieng was born in Johor Bahru, Malaysia and raised in Manchester, New Hampshire and Singapore. He attended university in Australia.

Over the past few years he's established himself as a prominent comedian in Australia and has been featured on the Melbourne International Comedy Festival Gala, won the Directors' Choice Award at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival 2014 and Opened for Dave Chappelle on his national tour of Australia.

This is Ronny's first appearance in Beijing.

Where: The Bookworm, 4 Nansanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: June 22, 8-10 pm



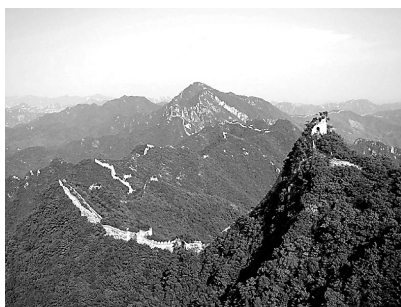
Sport

Hike from East Jiankou Great Wall to Mutianyu Great Wall

This hike combines the wild and restored walls. The hike will start from a small village in Jiankou, following a hillside trail to a Great Wall tower that is almost 1,000 meters above sea level.

From the tower, the hike will head east, walking the wall to Mutianyu. It will pass through some towers and end at the 10th tower of the Mutianyu Great Wall.

After hiking for 3 to 4 hours on that section, it will come down the wall along a trail. A driver will pick hikers up to have a home cooked meal at a local farmer's house.



When: June 21, 8 am-6 pm

Price: 450 yuan (students and members save 10 percent)

Website: chinatravellers.com/Action_Show.asp?id=8

Price: 150 yuan (presale), 180 yuan (at door)

Music

OuduO: The Music of Lebanon

The Eldebek brothers bring heart-stopping improvisations and uplifting songs from Lebanon, the Paris of the Middle East, to Gulou.

A member of YoyoMa's Silk Road Ensemble and a fellow with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Hadi Eldebek will perform his own compositions as well as old classics from the Arab world. Playing his beautiful oud – an ancestor to the lute – Hadi will be joined on the doumbek by his brother Mohamad.

Come listen to their songs of love, brotherhood and homeland while they tell stories and reveal the secrets of Arabian music.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Dongcheng District

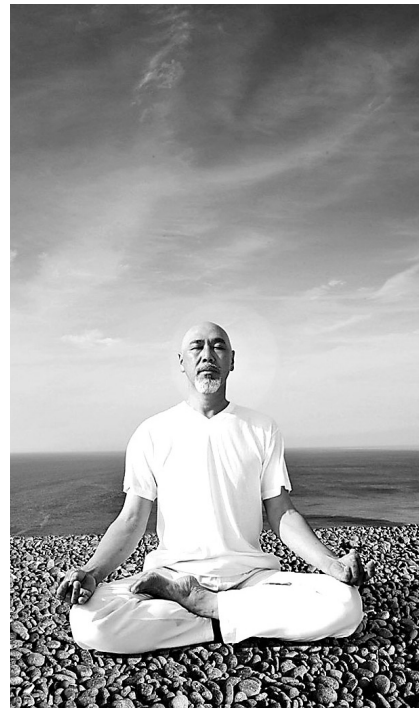
When: June 20, 9-11 pm

Price: 40 yuan



Community

"Life & Teachings of Sri. T. Krishnamacharya," with A.G. Mohan and Indra Mohan



This event offers a rare opportunity to deepen your understanding of the origins of yoga and the teachings of Sri T. Krishnamacharya. A.G. Mohan was a personal student of Krishnamacharya for 18 years. Indra Mohan is one of the few people to have received a post-graduate diploma in yoga from Krishnamacharya.

A question and answer segment will follow the lecture. This public lecture is free of charge, but registration is required.

Where: 108, Building 4, Yonghejiayuan, 3 Dongbinhe Lu, Dongcheng District

When: June 25, 6:30-8:30 pm

Website: yogayard.com/en/Mohan.html

Art

Peking Opera Workshop

Peking Opera is a rich aspect of Chinese culture. Understanding the history and background of the art form enriches the pleasure of observing its performance.

China Culture Center (CCC) will invite professional actors to introduce Peking Opera at this special lecture. Visitors will learn about the training and performing institutions that support Peking Opera.

Actors will demonstrate the rituals of preparation for a performance, in particular the meticulous process of applying makeup. Selected Peking Operas scenes will be performed to illustrate movements, gestures and voice adaption.

Where: China Culture Center, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: June 22, 2:30-4:30 pm

Price: 200 yuan



Young artists awarded for calligraphy and painting at Happy Valley

The award ceremony for the Beijing Youth Calligraphy and Painting Competition was held at Happy Valley on Saturday.

The competition, which lasted for more than two months, saw 66 middle school and primary school students recognized and 10 teachers granted the Best Tutor Award.

The ceremony started with performances by Happy Valley. Later in the ceremony, winning students received a certificate from Yang Haisong, chief counselor of the Beijing Young Pioneers, and Yuan Jun, assistant general manager of Happy Valley. The students were provided with year cards and tickets to Happy Valley as prizes. The competition is hosted by the Beijing Youth Working Committee, Happy Valley and Beijing Youth Daily. Students in more than 100 primary schools took part in the competition and nearly 12,000 works were received.

Happy Valley Season 3 opened on May 31. Its ocean theme includes two indoor stadiums and 13 entertainment facilities.



Artists receive their awards.

Photo provided by Beijing Education Media

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